

Cabinet

Monday, 16 September 2024

Present: N Redfearn (Elected Mayor) (in the Chair)
Councillors C Johnson, K Clark, P Earley, S Graham,
J Harrison, J Hunter, H Johnson, A McMullen and
S Phillips

In Attendance: C Black (Young Mayor), D Hodgson (Business
Representative), D Whyte (Northumbria Police),
R Layton (North Tyneside JTUC), V Smith (Voluntary
and Community Sector) and D McNally (Age UK
North Tyneside)

CAB42/24 Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

CAB43/24 To Receive any Declarations of Interest and Notification of any Dispensations Granted

Councillor K Clark declared a registerable personal interest in agenda Item 5:
2024-25 Performance and Financial Management Report to 31 May 2024
(CAB28/24), as she was a Director and Employee at Justice Prince CIC which had
contracts with North Tyneside Council and received funding from the Authority.

Councillor J Hunter declared a personal, non-registerable interest in agenda Item
10 as she is involved in the School Streets Project.

CAB44/24 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 July 2024 be
confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CAB45/24 Report of the Young Mayor

Cabinet heard from the young Mayor, he presented the following and asked if

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everyone had had a lovely summer.

The Young Mayor advised Cabinet that the Youth Council met in September after having a break over the holidays, as most of the Youth Council were busy spending time with family and friends.

He advised that at the meeting the Youth Council discussed their plans moving forward as a Youth Council to improve membership. Following on from the young people's conference earlier this year, the Youth Council are also looking at ways in which more young people get involved. Young people told us they are interested to be involved but don't always want to come to formal meetings.

The Young Mayor also advised the Cabinet that over the summer members of the Youth Council completed 2 litter picks with members of Children's Council, in Percy Main and Howdon area. The litter picks were a success and recyclable materials were also collected.

The Young Mayor advised that as part of his role he has met with a team of drug and alcohol workers who support adults and young people across the borough. He felt that this was important in connection to his pledge to gain an insight into how to raise awareness of the dangers of smoking, vaping, alcohol and illegal drugs in young people.

Coby advised the Cabinet that John our Member of Youth Parliament has had his first meetings in his role with Youth Focus who have taken over Youth Parliament from the British Youth Council. These went really well, and John is keen to get moving with the other MYP's to make change for young people.

The Children in Care Council have been busy making some new resources and bags for young people coming into care. The young people feel very strongly how important these are so have been given a small pot of funding to develop these.

The Children in Care Council have also been interviewing for new managers within the fostering services and social work teams.

The Mayor thanked the Young Mayor for his update and hoped that he had also had a good summer. The Mayor also thanked the young people for all the work

they had done to contribute to keeping the Borough tidy.

CAB46/24 2024-25 Performance and Financial Management Report to 31 July 2024

The most recent Performance and Financial Management Report was presented to Cabinet.

The report sets out the key areas of service delivery and the performance metrics that drive the financial forecast based on the position as of 31 July this year.

Service delivery across the Authority remains strong, although the Authority continues to manage high levels of demand in a number of areas including education, children's services, adult social care and homeless presentations.

Particular areas of strength include the policy priorities of the Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-2025.

- The Authority is on track against its commitment to become carbon net-zero by 2030. Carbon reduction in council service operations has decreased by 60% against the baseline year of 2010/11.
- The ambition to deliver 5,000 Affordable Homes is on track against the profiled target, with 2,289 homes delivered.
- Council Tax and Business Rates collection remains strong and comparable with national performance.
- We continue to take a "Home First" approach to hospital discharges and the number of homecare hours commissioned by the authority is continuing to increase, reducing reliance on short-term residential care, facilitating hospital discharges and increasing residents' independence to remain at home with support.

In line with previous reports, the Authority's Safety Valve Management Plan is forecast to reach a positive in year balance by the end of 2027/28 in relation to high needs education. At the end of July 2024 there are 2,246 EHCPs and the latest statutory return results show that since the Authority joined the Safety Valve Programme, the rate of new EHCPs issued has decreased in contrast to increases seen regionally and nationally. Whilst the rate of growth is significantly better

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than regional and national comparators, the Authority continues to manage the high volume of requests received for assessment, mediations and tribunals.

Cabinet will remember that our progress in this area secured additional funding of £19.5m from the Department for Education. A condition of this funding was for regular performance reports to the DfE – three submissions have been made, confirming the Authority is on track against the agreed performance measures.

Home to School Transport Service has a reported pressure of £1.8m partly due to increased inflationary costs, but mostly attributable to the high number of pupils with complex needs who need support with transport. Cabinet will be aware that Home to School Transport is being reviewed as part of the existing MTFP programme.

Children's Services in particular is an area of increased demand for the Authority leading to financial pressures. The number of children in our care remains higher than the 365 children budgeted for with 375 children in care in July which, along with the placement mix of children in care and the cost of individual places, has led to a financial pressures. However, positive improvements continue to be seen in terms of the number of children in need, which is now in line with the MTFP assumptions and will deliver financial benefits in the medium-term. There is further detail on performance contained within Annex 1 to this report.

As Cabinet has discussed in previous meetings, we know that there continues to be significant pressures in 2024/25 and into the medium term.

Driven by our current performance information, as summarised, the forecast net pressure for the General Fund is £14m, £0.326m worse than the outturn position reported at the last Cabinet meeting.

Many of the pressures in the current year are consistent with those faced in recent years, and importantly form part of our existing Medium Term Financial Plan projects. The pressures include the impact of inflation, on both in-house delivery and externally commissioned services, as well as rising demand and increased complexity for services within both adults and children's social care.

Cabinet will note that a programme of work is in place to both manage and mitigate the in-year pressures and the Senior Leadership Team has worked with

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Senior Officers across the Authority to consider a range of in-year mitigations that could be explored to support the 2024/25 position. These are included in the forecast position.

In terms of Schools, the projected year end deficit position is £9.707m as our schools continue to face similar challenges to the Authority. We continue to work with our schools to help address the deficit position.

It is good to note that there are no material issues in respect of the HRA with regards to its normal activity, and the HRA position is projected to outturn with a minor overspend of £0.039m.

Moving onto the Investment Plan - over £21.6m has been spent in the Borough so far this financial year. Officers have carried out a further review of the plan, resulting in variations of £10.3m and reprogramming of £5.6m to the end of July 2024 and challenge sessions are underway with Senior Officers to further review our delivery plans.

Cabinet **Resolved** to (a) note the update provided on the Performance of the Authority including updated data on the key pressures facing the Authority and progress against the Our North Tyneside Plan 2021-2025, (b) note the forecast budget monitoring position for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA), schools finance and Treasury Management together with the service delivery performance position across the Authority as at 31 July 2024, (c) note the Authority's Investment Plan spend of £21.556m to 31 July 2024 and the proposed financing of the Plan to the end of the year, (d) approve reprofiling of £10.299m from 2024/25 into future years, and variations of £5.626m within the 2024-2029 Investment Plan and note the current position with Developers' Contributions, and (e) approve the receipt of £0.465m new revenue grants and £4.768m of new capital grants

CAB47/24 Annual Corporate Complaints Report 2023-2024

Cabinet was presented with the Annual Complaints Report 2023-24 which is an important part of how the council demonstrates it is listening and learning from residents.

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When considering the millions of individual services and transactions that the council delivers each year, the number of complaints the council receives, is very low.

Complaints to the Authority have reduced by 55% over the last 5 years which is very positive, and it was noted that it was pleasing to see this trend continue in 2023-24 with complaints at their lowest for 5 years.

It was noted that the Authority's aim is to get things right first time and minimise complaint, an organisation such as the Authority, providing the range and scale of services, should always expect feedback from its residents.

The data included in the 2023-24 Annual Complaints Report shows that we resolve over two thirds of complaints at the earliest opportunity and provide timely resolutions and responses.

In previous years the Elected Mayor and Cabinet invested more into listening to our residents and managing complaints, through the creation of the Customer First Office. This year we have gone even further by creating a new complaints system to improve the way services record, monitor and report on the findings from complaints, to support learning and service improvements

Our Customer Promise makes it clear what all residents can expect from the Council, and the Deputy Mayor advised that he is determined that each and every council service, does everything that it can, to keep that promise.

It was noted that reassuringly, this year's Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman feedback shows that the council has a robust process in place for the management of complaints.

This year, officers launched the Corporate and Housing Complaints Procedure, bringing it up to date with the Complaint Handling Codes from both Ombudsman and ensuring the very best practice.

The Council are committed to learning from all customer feedback, including complaints, and gratitude was expressed to everyone who takes the time to share their experiences with us.

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Cabinet **Resolved** to (a) agree the Annual Complaints Report for 2023-24 and agreed for it to be published on the Authority's website, and (b) note and receive the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review of complaints concerning North Tyneside Council for 2023-24 and to agree to its publication on the Authority's website.

CAB48/24 Audit Committee Annual Report 2023-24

Cabinet was provide with an update on the details of the work performed by the Audit Committee during 2023/24.

Cabinet was asked to consider and note the annual report which sets out how Audit Committee has discharged responsibilities within its terms of reference, the outcome of its self-assessment of effectiveness against recommended practice and an overview of the activity it has undertaken during the year.

Dr Stuart Green, currently acting Chair of the Committee, was invited to talk Cabinet through the Committee's work.

Dr Green thanked Cabinet for the opportunity to present the Audit Committee Annual Report.

Firstly, Dr Green asked for thanks and gratitude to the previous Chair, Malcolm Wilkinson to be recorded, for his significant contribution over 10 years of service and his leadership as Chair in recent years.

Dr Green also thanked all Elected Members who served on the Committee during 2023/24 and welcomed the new members who joined the Committee in May of this year.

Dr Green advised that given our constantly changing and evolving risk profile, challenges and financial pressures the provision of independent assurance to the Authority has, arguably, never been more important. Audit Committee plays a vital role in supporting and maintaining a culture and environment to support the integrity of governance arrangements and the provision of information for decision making for the Authority.

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Dr Green advised that it is, therefore, important that Cabinet are assured the Audit Committee discharges its responsibilities, as set out within the Constitution, and it is operating effectively.

The annual report sets out the work the Committee has undertaken in discharging its responsibilities and the reports we have received in relation to finance and external audit, internal audit, risk management and counter fraud.

As a Committee Dr Green advised that a self-assessment against recommended practice and guidance on the operation of an audit committee in local government, which is produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy has been undertaken.

Dr Green was pleased to report that this self-assessment concluded the Committee is operating effectively and, in the main, complies with recommended practice. It was noted that this is only recommended practice and there is no impact on compliance with statutory requirements in relation to the two areas where the Committee does not operate in line with recommended practice.

Firstly, the Committee is responsible for approving the annual statement of accounts. Recommended practice is that the Committee maintains its advisory role by not taking on decision making powers. However, there is no suitable alternative within the Authority's existing Committee structure and this responsibility remains with the Committee who benefit from having co-opted members with financial skills and experience to effectively support this process.

Secondly, the Committee's annual report is presented to Cabinet. Recommended practice is that the Audit Committee reports to full Council. This does not impact on transparency or accountability with both Audit Committee and Cabinet papers publicly available.

Dr Green hoped that Cabinet found the report interesting and helpful in providing assurance that Audit Committee continues to be a vital assurance link for the Authority and in turn, residents, businesses, and all those who live or work within the borough.

Dr Green thanked Cabinet for their time and was happy to take any comments or questions on the report.

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Cabinet thanked Dr Green, the officers and Committee members for its assurances.

Cabinet **Resolved** that the Audit Committee Annual Report for 2023/24 be noted.

CAB49/24 Children and Young People's Plan 2024–25

Cabinet was presented with a report to provide an update on the partnership's refreshed Children and Young People Plan for 2024–2025 and seeks Cabinet's endorsement of the plan.

Cabinet were advised that the current Children and Young People Plan 2021–2025 was published in 2021, and is set to be fully revisited in 2025. The priorities within this refreshed Children and Young People Plan build on the positive work delivered across the partnership in recent years and is based on a detailed understanding of need across the borough, listening to what children and young people tell us important to them.

The refreshed plan describes the current strategic priorities of the partnership, including the continued impact of COVID-19 on children and young people, and the services that work with them.

This Plan supports the delivery of two themes within the Our North Tyneside Plan; that we are a 'family friendly' and 'caring' Borough.

It also delivers on two key objectives set out in our joint health and wellbeing strategy – Equally Well: A healthier, fairer future for North Tyneside – that children and young people have the best start in life where we maximise their capabilities.

Our collective vision for children and young people in North Tyneside is:

Making North Tyneside an even greater place for children and young people to thrive; where all, including those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or disabled, are ready for school, ready for work and life, are cared for and supported.

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The plan sets out four key outcomes that the partnership wants to deliver for children and young people:

- that they live a safe life,
- a happy life,
- a healthy life,
- and that they are able to achieve in life.

These priorities are underpinned by the partnership's shared principles, that we listen to the voices of children and young people and that we continue to further develop our prevention and early help agenda, identifying and meeting needs of children and young people early and preventing needs from escalating wherever possible.

This plan is underpinned by a robust delivery action plan overseen by our Children and Young People Partnership Board, which reports progress into the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership.

Cabinet **Resolved** to (a) note the work that has been undertaken by the Authority with its partners, to co-produce the refreshed Children and Young People's Plan for 2024-2025, and (b) endorse the refreshed Children and Young People's Plan for 2024-25 and recommend that the refreshed plan be adopted by full Council on 19 September 2024.

CAB50/24 Ambition for Education - Update

The Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion, Employment and Skills presented an update report on Ambition for Education but firstly expressed his congratulation to the children and young people of North Tyneside on their recent achievements in the summer in their GCSEs and Post 16 examinations. He was delighted to say that early indications would suggest results at both at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 are in line with national results. He advised that the young residents of North Tyneside have faced many challenges on the run up to these examinations and it is testimony to the resilience of our young people and school staff that we can celebrate their successes considering the disruption they have endured in their education over the last few years.

It was noted that North Tyneside has an education system to be proud of. A

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strong performer regionally and nationally, this reflects the hard work of Head Teachers and their teams, governing bodies, Elected Members, Authority staff and the fantastic children and young people.

Cabinet were advised that aligned to the Children and Young People's Plan 2021-2025, our vision for education in North Tyneside is:

"Making North Tyneside an even greater place for children and young people to thrive; where all can access a high-class education with a culture of inclusion and achievement."

The purpose of the report presented was to outline the local context, describe the key strategic challenges currently facing the education system in North Tyneside and the work underway as part of the Strategic Education and Inclusion Review. Whilst these are not stand alone decisions for the Local Authority, there is further work required to tackle these challenges in partnership with education leaders.

Within the recommendations, Cabinet are asked to recognise:

- the significant work that has happened in response to the key strategic challenges regarding Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision, including the Authority's progress since joining the Safety Valve Intervention Programme in April 2023.
- Cabinet are also asked to note the work that has progressed regarding the financial sustainability of schools and agree to progress the further work identified;
- and lastly Cabinet are asked to note the activities in relation to Catchment area amendments across the Borough and the ongoing work in that regard; and the intention to begin engaging with schools to explore options around future capacity and demand potentially arising from Local Plan Strategic sites.

Cabinet **Resolved** to (a) note the key elements regarding the local context and note the continued challenges facing education in the Borough, (b) note and recognise the significant work that has been undertaken in response to the key strategic challenges regarding Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision, including the Authority's progress since joining the Safety Valve Intervention Programme in April 2023, (c) note the work that has progressed regarding financial sustainability of schools and agreed to progress further work as set out in the report, (d) note the activities undertaken in relation to catchment area amendments across the Borough and the ongoing work in that regard, (e)

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authorise the Director of Childrens Services and the Director of Resources in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Inclusion, Employment and Skills, the Cabinet member for Supporting and Protecting Children and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources to take all necessary steps to progress the worked referred to in recommendations (3) and (4), and (f) agree to receive further reports as required on the progress made as set out in the recommendations above.

CAB51/24 North Tyneside Transport Strategy Annual Report 2023-24

Cabinet received the Annual Report on the North Tyneside Transport Strategy.

The Strategy, which was updated and approved by Cabinet in October 2021, defines the Authority's vision for transport in the borough and sets out a set of principles key to achieving this.

The Strategy reflects the priorities of the regional North East Transport Plan, which was approved in 2021 by the former North East Joint Transport Committee.

As transport is a major contributor to carbon emissions, the North Tyneside Transport Strategy has a vital part to play in the Authority's response to our declaration of a Climate Emergency. The Authority also has specific policies and strategies covering a number of transport-related areas, which align with the aims of the Transport Strategy.

Some of the key points arising in this annual progress report are summarised within Appendix B of the report.

The Annual Report notes that:

- Cycling in the borough continues to be ahead of our targets, which benefits people's health and contributes towards our aims of carbon reduction and good air quality.
- Our 'Go Smarter' work with local schools has seen a continued increase in sustainable travel. We continue to work with schools to develop further 'School Streets' initiatives and we are also seeing substantial participation in 'Bikeability' cycle training and road safety education.

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- North Tyneside's transport network has become safer compared with the baseline – the Authority's significant and targeted investment in major schemes over recent years has been a factor in this.
- We opened the new North Shields Transport Hub in September 2023 as part of the ongoing regeneration of the town centre which we are delivering through the North Shields Masterplan. We've made significant progress with the development of key projects identified in the Ambition for Wallsend, and we seek to bring investment to the North West area of the borough and ensure regeneration has benefits for all residents, in line with the Our North Tyneside Plan.
- We've continued to deliver our programme of transport schemes, having secured substantial external funding, working with our regional partners, from sources such as the Active Travel Fund [ATF] and the Transforming Cities Fund [TCF]. For example, we have put in place the first phase of the Sea Front Sustainable Route, and delivered walking, wheeling and cycling improvements linking to Metro stations and other local destinations in Whitley Bay and at Norham Road in North Shields. This work helps us to reach our goals to create a safer environment which supports everyday cycling, walking and wheeling.
- We're continuing to play our role in supporting wider improvements to public transport in the North East, such as the Northumberland Line major rail project, the introduction of the new Metro fleet and working with the new Mayoral Combined Authority and partners across the region to deliver the aims of the North East Bus Service Improvement Plan.

The report demonstrates the substantial progress to date, which we can build on to deliver the aims of the Our North Tyneside Plan – specifically, increasing the opportunities for safe walking, wheeling and cycling and seeking to make North Tyneside carbon net-zero by 2030.

Cabinet agreed to note the contents of the North Tyneside Transport Strategy Annual Information Report 2023/24.

CAB52/24 **Date and Time of Next Meeting**

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The next meeting will be held on Monday 14 October 2024 at 6.00pm in 0.02, Quadrant East.

Minutes published on 19 September 2024.

The decisions contained within these Minutes may be implemented (unless called in by 3 Non-Executive Members for consideration by the Overview, Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee) immediately following the expiry of the call-in period; i.e. 5.00pm on Thursday 26 September 2024.